

Home Service for May 31, 2020

Welcome and Announcements

Although we cannot meet together in the church building we can share worship together in our individual homes. We will continue to work to stay connected and be there for each other during the difficult time. We are going through something never experience before. I hope this will help you worship God today with those who are in your home. Add hymns if possible, too.

Continue your prayers for Jamie and Lynn.

There is no fear the Holy Spirit cannot overcome. There is no door the Spirit of grace cannot breach. This is good news indeed.

Gathering Prayer:

Emblazon us with your Spirit, O God. Give us hearts and lives ready to serve you in this world. Be with us today as we gather to hear your word for us. AMEN.

Opening Prayer:

Spirit of wind and fire, come to us this day, freeing us from our fears. Lift us up when we have fallen. Dust us off and set us squarely on the path to hope you have set before us. Remind us that we are never far from your presence. Get us ready for the great adventure and opportunities that lie before us. Help us to be good and willing workers for you. In Christ's Name, we pray. AMEN.

Prayer of Confession:

Spirit of wind and fire, blow open the doors we erect to keep ourselves sealed off from your world. We long to be set free from the fears that jail us and to be released from chains that bind us. We yearn to draw near to your source of living water, and to drink deeply from its well. We want to be cleansed in your holy fire, and to be driven into the streets by your winds of grace. Come to us, and heal us once more, Mighty Spirit, that we may embrace your gifts in service to a world in need. Amen.

Words of Assurance

When God breathes the Holy Spirit into our lives the earth is renewed. When God blesses us with gifts of this same Spirit, we too are renewed and made whole. Rejoice, sister and brothers, God's steadfast love endures forever.

Read Psalm 104:24-35

LORD, you have done so many things! You made them all so wisely! The earth is full of your creations! ²⁵ And then there's the sea, wide and deep, with its countless creatures— living things both small and large. ²⁶ There go the ships on it, and Leviathan, which you made, plays in it! ²⁷ All your creations wait for you to give them their food on time. ²⁸ When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled completely full! ²⁹ But when you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to dust. ³⁰ When you let loose your breath, they are created, and you make the surface of the ground brand-new again. ³¹ Let the LORD's glory last forever! Let the LORD rejoice in all he has made! ³² He has only to look at the earth, and it shakes. God just touches the mountains, and they erupt in smoke. ³³ I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I'm still alive. ³⁴ Let my praise be pleasing to him; I'm rejoicing in the LORD! ³⁵ Let sinners be wiped clean from the earth; let the wicked be no more. But let my whole being bless the LORD! Praise the LORD!

Prayers of the People:

The bars of our prisons melt at the power of the Holy Spirit, O God. We praise and thank you for the fulfillment of the promise made by your Son Jesus that we would have a counselor, a guide. We thought we could feel no greater joy than we felt on Easter Day when the good news of Jesus' resurrection greeted our ears! But this surpasses all that. You have come to us in our imprisonment and freed us. You have given to us a voice of power and hope to proclaim the good news! You have poured into our lives the Holy Spirit to be with us always! These things are so amazing to us. Thank you. We ask that you be with our dear ones who face illness, who mourn, who feel lost and alone, who hurt in so many ways. Help us to reach out to them with lovingkindness, in the name of the Holy Spirit. Strengthen us for the times ahead. Give us courage to proclaim your love with our lives, for we ask this in Jesus' Name. AMEN.

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is The kingdom, and the power and the glory forever and ever. AMEN

Read the Lesson: Acts 2:1-21

When Pentecost Day arrived, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound from heaven like the howling of a fierce wind filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be individual flames of fire alighting on each one of them. ⁴ They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them to speak.

⁵ There were pious Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd gathered. They were mystified because everyone heard them speaking in their native languages. ⁷ They were surprised and amazed, saying, "Look, aren't all the people who are speaking Galileans, every one of them?" ⁸ How then can each of us hear them speaking in our native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes, and Elamites; as well as residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the regions of Libya bordering Cyrene; and visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism), ¹¹ Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the mighty works of God in our own languages!" ¹² They were all surprised and bewildered. Some asked each other, "What does this mean?" ¹³ Others jeered at them, saying, "They're full of new wine!"

¹⁴ Peter stood with the other eleven apostles. He raised his voice and declared, "Judeans and everyone living in Jerusalem! Know this! Listen carefully to my words! ¹⁵ These people aren't drunk, as you suspect; after all, it's only nine o'clock in the morning! ¹⁶ Rather, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ *In the last days, God says,*

I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy.

Your young will see visions.

Your elders will dream dreams.

¹⁸ *Even upon my servants, men and women,*

I will pour out my Spirit in those days,

and they will prophesy.

¹⁹ *I will cause wonders to occur in the heavens above*

*and signs on the earth below,
blood and fire and a cloud of smoke.
20 The sun will be changed into darkness,
and the moon will be changed into blood,
before the great and spectacular day of the Lord comes.
21 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*^[a]

Read the Epistle Lesson: 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13

So I want to make it clear to you that no one says, “Jesus is cursed!” when speaking by God’s Spirit, and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit. ⁴ There are different spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; ⁵ and there are different ministries and the same Lord; ⁶ and there are different activities but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. ⁷ A demonstration of the Spirit is given to each person for the common good. ⁸ A word of wisdom is given by the Spirit to one person, a word of knowledge to another according to the same Spirit, ⁹ faith to still another by the same Spirit, gifts of healing to another in the one Spirit, ¹⁰ performance of miracles to another, prophecy to another, the ability to tell spirits apart to another, different kinds of tongues^[a] to another, and the interpretation of the tongues to another. ¹¹ All these things are produced by the one and same Spirit who gives what he wants to each person.

¹² Christ is just like the human body—a body is a unit and has many parts; and all the parts of the body are one body, even though there are many. ¹³ We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body, whether Jew or Greek, or slave or free, and we all were given one Spirit to drink.

Read the Gospel Lesson: John 7:37-39

On the last and most important day of the festival, Jesus stood up and shouted, “All who are thirsty should come to me!

³⁸ All who believe in me should drink!

As the scriptures said concerning me,^[a]

Rivers of living water will flow out from within him.”

³⁹ Jesus said this concerning the Spirit. Those who believed in him would soon receive the Spirit, but they hadn’t experienced the Spirit yet since Jesus hadn’t yet been glorified.

Message

Before our Lord's ascension, he promised explosive and expansive power for the church's life and ministry through his Holy Spirit. That power was delivered on Pentecost. The church was empowered. Today we are celebrating Pentecost. Today, the birthday of the Church.

As Jesus's disciples huddled together in fear, the Holy Spirit entered their dwelling with rushing wind and tongues of fire. In that moment, the Church was born. Without Pentecost, the gospel would not have moved beyond that group of disciples huddled in the upper room. The spirit that was promised to the prophet Joel is active in our world today, granting visions and dreams to our old and young alike. The power of God to create and renew life is the power of the Holy Spirit. We see this power in the psalmist's hymn of praise. We behold this power in Paul's discussion of adoption in Christ through the Spirit. And we see the promise of this power in Jesus, as He comforts His disciples before His death.

As the people gathered for that first Pentecost felt the rush of wind and listened to the voices rising around them, what surrounded them was a complete and overpowering love: the love of God in Jesus Christ, the love that is sovereign and faithful to all people, the love that knows no boundaries, and the love that fulfills all our deepest hopes. If the celebration of Pentecost means anything, it calls the church to a universal witness; to extend the hope of forgiveness to all the nations, even as it has been extended to us. We all know the feeling of hopelessness. We have all prayed for pain, sorrow, and difficulty to be taken away. We have all yearned for deeper love. Everywhere people are struggling with these same feelings, and the answer, the cure is Christ. There are people all over the world who need to hear the good news of Jesus Christ, who also need to feel his love.

The Holy Spirit's power swept up people into the unity desired by the psalmist and expected by our Lord among people who claim Him as saving Lord. Only God's Holy Spirit has the power to move people from what separates them to who can bring them together; Jesus! The witness of Pentecost is this: even if we walk different paths, even if we mingle in different circles, even if we talk different languages, we can still share the love of Christ with those people, with all people, through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's power draws people together in the name of Jesus. It happened on Pentecost. It can happen anywhere.

The aim of the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost is not to give people a "spirituality" which will make the things of earth irrelevant. The point is to transform earth with

the power of heaven and the love of Christ, beginning with the followers of Jesus, the Christian community. Through the Holy Spirit, some of the creative power of God himself comes from heaven to earth and does its work there. But always the witness of the Holy Spirit is most effective when we tap into its power.

There is a quote that says when all else fails, where everything else falls short, “For the heights and depths no words can reach,” God has given us his Very Spirit, “the soul’s own speech.” And that is what we remember and celebrate on Pentecost Sunday. God has given us the Holy Spirit, His very presence with us. It is the Spirit that lives within us. It is the Spirit that is at work all around us. It is the Spirit which upholds and strengthens us to serve God in the world. And it is the Spirit that unifies us despite all of our differences. All who follow the Messiah are united by the power of the Holy Spirit, which rises above all other powers of this world. As we connect with the Spirit, we are brought into Christ’s saving love, and we have the power we need to live the Christian life and to serve in fulfilling God’s purposes in the world.

When everything else in the world seeks to divide, Pentecost reminds us that Christians are people who are drawn together by a common devotion. “They were all together in one place,” our reading tells us. They were a group of people who probably had nothing else in common save this one thing: they loved Jesus. They were all there, their differences overcome, for the simple reason that they adored Christ. And Christians have been drawn together for the same reason ever since. Even now! And it is because of that bond in Christ Jesus our Lord that we can have hope.

It has been said that Pentecost is the “big bang” event that creates the Christian Church and puts God’s saving acts through Jesus Christ into motion. It also explains how a small group of frightened, puzzled, and largely uneducated men and women could so quickly become a force to be reckoned with all across the known world! Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Church is born and is given the authority to proclaim the good news of the Risen Lord to the very same people who had put him to death!

Good News is exactly what this world needs, especially during our present situation with the virus. When the ways and words of the world fail to offer comfort amid such times, the Holy Spirit brings a message of hope. Despite the incomprehensible Babel of humanity, the power of the Holy Spirit is able to unify the voice of Good News so that it is heard. By the Spirit of God, we can rise above

all of the jumbled mess of this world with a message of a Savior, a message of love and hope for all people.

I feel many people dismiss the story of Pentecost as a “one-time thing.” The Holy Spirit came in the rush of wind and tongues of flame; thousands of people were converted and thus, the church began. “God said it. I believe it. And that settles it.” But the book of Acts is strong testimony to the filling of the Holy Spirit as an ongoing gift, not just a one-time event. We know that we need the power of the Spirit. We know that nothing can change this world but some intrusion by a power greater than anything the world itself contains. Pentecost challenges all churches and all Christians to live into the promise that Christ is always present, alive, and at work in the world.

Let us remember what Pentecost is all about; a Spirit-filled revelry celebrating the saving work of Jesus Christ. Indeed, God is faithful and sovereign. God in Jesus Christ loves us and cares for us. Let’s tap into the power of the Holy Spirit and share that good news in this world! There is SO much to celebrate!!!

Wind, fire, surprise, cacophony of languages, promises fulfilled, dreams, visions, gifts given and received, and most of all the Spirit—these are all parts of what make up the Pentecost experience, not only for the first-century church, but for us as well. We need to help folks experience these feelings with an intensity that may have been lost through familiarity. Let the rush of the mighty wind be felt, the flames seen, and the visions and dreams happen as we celebrate the gift of the Spirit in our midst.

Let us pray: Heavenly Father as we celebrate Your Church, and Your spirit. Help our church and every United Methodist Church to be a spirit-filled congregation reflecting Your glory, Now and always. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.

Benediction:

God, out of God’s great love, has created you. Jesus Christ, out of his great love, has redeemed you. The Holy Spirit, out of great love, has lifted and inspired you to go in peace and service throughout God’s world, proclaiming the good news of peace, love, hope, and joy to all. Go in peace. AMEN.